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Parental roles and types of parentings as determinants of a preschooler's emotional and personal well-being

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Abstract

This article concerns the problem of parent-child relationship and its consequences for the emotional and personal well-being of a preschooler.

The modern family is undergoing a crisis, characterized by decreased adult responsibility for the full personal development of a child. However, it is the psychological climate and especially the specific features of family relationships that play a decisive role in this process. Preschool childhood is an important period in the formation of a child's personality, determining its future development prospects. The primary goal of our research was to reveal interrelationship between parental functional roles as well as types of parentings and the self-esteem and anxiety of an older preschooler.

According to the results we can say that as elements of the parent-child relationship structure parental relationships and functional parental roles have a significant impact on the emotional and personal well-being of a preschooler.

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1. Introduction

The concepts of marriage and family in modern Russia are undergoing a crisis period, expressed in an increased number of civil marriages, reducing the need for birth and upbringing of children, evading parental roles due to the unwillingness and/or inability to "be a parent." This type of trend, according to some authors (I.B. Bestuzhev-Lada, M.I. Buyanov, A.I. Zakharov, N.D. Nikandrov, D. Popenoe), leads to the disintegration of a family as a way of life in the traditional sense. The consequences of the traditional family transformation for all its members and society as a whole have not been studied well enough. Being part of the social structure of society the family is guided by regulations existing in this society. Social norms and cultural patterns set certain benchmark ideas about being a husband or a wife, a father or a mother [1] and about the methods parents can use to influence their child educationally. The psychological climate and especially the specifics of family relationships play a crucial role in shaping a child's personality. Moreover, parental interrelations within the family, parent-child relationships in the family continue to exert their influence during the childhood and later the adult life of a person. The content and emotional side of these relationships, their forms, functions can be changed, but their significance is constantly high, even for a mature person.

A fundamental attribute of the family as a system of relationships is its role structure, which advises family members what, how, when and in what order they should act when entering into a relationship with each other. [2]

Many foreign and domestic authors name and describe the interpersonal aspect of "children's roles" and the consequences of their "playing" [3], [4]. As for the interpersonal aspects of parental roles, then, in our opinion, they have been researched and described insufficiently since in their studies of parent-child interaction most authors consider, first of all, its components such as: parenting and behavioral styles; types of parental relationships, parental positions, parental imprints, directives, etc. [5], [6], [7]. Therefore, in our opinion, the most interesting aspects in the study of the role parent-child interaction are parental roles, which E.N. Vasilyeva and A.V. Orlov call "functional". "A parent's functional role" is defined by the authors as a family member's social function towards a child, which corresponds to the family life, family-adopted code of conduct, traditions and established interpersonal relationships. In the structure of the "mother/father" role the authors singled out and described 20 functional parental roles, created a technique for determining the role structure of parent-child interaction, which we used in this study [8].

Russian and foreign researchers highlight the connection between types of parental relationship/parenting and children's self-development (B.G. Ananiev, R. Burns, L.I. Bozovich, A.J. Varga, L.S. Vygotsky, J. Piaget, M.I. Lisina, V.V. Stolin, E.G. Eidemiller, E. Erickson et al.). For example, a child's low self-esteem is closely related with the type of upbringing in the context of which parents form their child's adaptive behavior, obedience, ability to adapt to other people, etc. [9], as well as increased anxiety is formed in an atmosphere of a child's "failure" and an adult's "authoritarianism" [10].

The aim of our study was to identify the interconnection between parental functional roles, parental relationship types and levels of self-esteem and anxiety in older preschoolers. In our view, these two indicators reflect, in general, the emotional and personal welfare of a child at this age period. In addition, self-esteem and the anxiety level indicator are included in the overall structure of psychological readiness for school and help or hinder a preschooler's effective adaptation to the new environment, activities, communication with others. The main hypothesis of the study was the fact that certain types of parental roles and relations with a child contribute to a higher or lower level of his anxiety and self-esteem.

2. Method

This study involved 171 people: 57 children of the preschool age (6-7 years), going to kindergartens in Nizhny Novgorod, and their parents (mothers and fathers), the total number being 114 people, aged 25-35 years.

As a diagnostic tool we chose the following techniques: the projective test of children's anxiety "Choose the right person" (R. Temml, M. Dorci, V. Amen), which explores anxiety so characteristic of a child in his typical situations; the test-questionnaire about parental attitudes towards children (A.Ya. Varga, V.V. Stolin), which is a technique for diagnosing parental relationships as a system of various feelings towards the child, behavioral stereotypes, practiced in communication with him, the peculiarities of perception and understanding of the child's character and personality, his actions; the "Ladder" technique of determining one's self-esteem by V.G. Schur for children of the senior preschool and younger school age; the author's technique "Social family roles" (version of "My parental roles") (E.N. Vasilyeva, A.V. Orlov [8], identifying the position of a mother / a father regarding the distribution of their functional parental roles.

The analysis of empirical data was performed using the SPSS 21.0 software and included methods of descriptive statistics and the Spearman correlation analysis.

3. Results and discussion

The analysis of the data obtained by V.G. Schur's "Ladder" technique of determining self-esteem allowed us to state that 47% of the preschool children had an average level of self-esteem, 36% revealed a high level of self-esteem, 17% - a low level. This distribution reflects the norm of personality development in children of this age period, indicating the prevalence of their positive attitude.

The study of the anxiety level in children as described in "Choose the right person" (R. Temml, M Dorci., V. Amen), revealed that most of the subjects (53%) showed an average level of anxiety; the number of children who had a predominantly low level of anxiety was lower (36%); the least part of the preschool children had high levels of anxiety (11%). Thus, this sample can be characterized as a relatively prosperous emotionally.

Some data was obtained on the distribution of types of parenting and the structure of the functional roles of fathers and mothers, expressed in individual parent profiles.

To test the hypothesis a correlation analysis was carried out which revealed that certain types of parenting had a significant impact on the level of anxiety and self-esteem in preschool children (Table 1). The analysis of the interrelation between anxiety and preschoolers exposed to peculiar parenting styles showed that there was a positive correlation between the type of maternal attitude to her child as "a little loser" and the level of his anxiety. When the mother of a child treats him as slow-witted, incapable, ignores his interests, hobbies, thoughts and feelings, the level of his anxiety increases, which entails, first and foremost, the general passivity of behavior, experience of fear, insecurity and low self-esteem.

Table 1. Relationship between the types of mother and father's parenting styles and the indicators of a preschooler's emotional and personal well-being

Indicators of emotional and personal well-being of a preschooler	Types of parenting									
	Mother					Father				
	Adoption-rejection	Cooperation	Symbiosis	Authoritarian hypersocialization	«Little loser»	Adoption-rejection	Cooperation	Symbiosis	Authoritarian hypersocialization	«Little loser»
Anxiety	-0.51	-0.18	0.03	0.02	0.49	-0.13	-0.18	0.15	0.05	0.21
Self-esteem	0.03	-0.13	-0.01	-0.56	-0.23	0.47	0.21	-0.09	0.08	-0.41

Such type of a mother's attitude to her child as "Adoption-Rejection" also affects the child's level of anxiety. That is, if a mother takes her child as he is, respects and recognizes his personality, endorses his interests, supports his plans, spends a lot of time with him and does not regret it, the level of anxiety decreases.

With regard to self-esteem, the overly authoritarian mother's attitude to a child, requiring his unconditional obedience, leads to the formation of his low self-esteem, which is expressed in his fear of being rejected by others, hypertrophic addiction to their opinion, lack of initiative in the activities due to the predominant motivation of avoiding a failure.

In our study, the types of paternal relationships do not cause changes in the child's level of anxiety. However, they do have an impact on the level of children's self-esteem: the type of a father's behavior based on the acceptance of and respect for his child, belief in his child's ability leads to the formation of a preschooler's self-confidence, sociability, balance and persistence in achieving his goals.

Once the hierarchy of functional parental adult roles was built, we defined the nature of individual roles' influence on the level of a child's anxiety and self-esteem (Table 2).

Table 2. The correlation between the functional roles of a mother and a father and indicators of a preschooler's emotional and personal well-being

Indicators of emotional and personal well-being of a preschooler	Mother's functional roles					Father's functional roles						
	Mastermind	Defender	Advisor	Comforter	Aesthete	Educator	Unifier	Guardian	Helper	Companion	Advisor	Teacher
Anxiety	-0.55	-0.61	0.59	0.5	0.46	0.02	0.43	-0.54	0.22	0.17	0.29	-0.09
Self-esteem	-0.09	0.28	0.1	0.13	0.13	0.43	-0.25	0.4	-0.56	-0.72	-0.43	0.44

Based on the analysis of the data in Table 2, we can state that the frequency with which a mother uses such roles as "Advisor" (whose advice the child seeks for valuable guidance), "Comforter" (on whom the child relies for emotional support and empathy), "Aesthete" (who gives the child a sense of taste, harmony and beauty) and a father plays his role as "Unifier" (who unites the family in a single unit, dampens conflicts and brings relatives close) increases the levels of a preschooler's anxiety. Helping to reduce a child's anxiety level is the behavior of a mother, expressed in such roles as "Mastermind" (who encourages a child, raises his mood, adapts him to everything, gives confidence); "Defender" (who protects a child from problems, gives peace) and a father in the role of "Guardian" (who takes care of the child, satisfies his material needs).

Our study revealed no significant effect of maternal role behavior on the level of the preschooler's self-esteem.

At the same time the father's role behavior has significant influence on the formation of the child's self-esteem: the role of "Educator" (who deliberately instills in the child behavioral norms and rules and indicates the need to act in a given situation), "Guardian" (who takes care of a child and satisfies his material needs) and "Teacher" (who purposefully teaches a child and passes on appropriate knowledge and skills to him), increase the child's self-esteem, although such roles as "Helper" (whom the child asks for help in terms of practical actions and who helps in any case), "Companion" (a person a child tends to talk to and to get useful information from) and "Advisor" (a person a child seeks advice from in order to get valuable guidance), on the contrary, contribute to the reduction of its level.

Overall, our results suggest that these elements of the parent-child relationship structure such as the parent relationship and functional parental roles have a significant impact on the emotional and personal sphere of a senior preschool child.

4. Conclusion

As the result of our study the indicators of interrelationship between types of parenting and parental functional roles, on the one hand, and a preschooler's self-esteem and anxiety, on the other, allow us to recommend a methodological complex consisting of a "test-questionnaire of parental attitude towards children" (A.Ya. Varga, V.V. Stolin) and questionnaire "The social role of the family" (version of "My parental roles") by E.N. Vasilyeva and A.V. Orlov as a tool for a primary rapid diagnosis of the emotional and personal welfare of a child in a family, carried out as part of psychological service in a kindergarten.

In addition, the authors deem it necessary to continue research in the following areas: the study of the role structure of parent-child relationship at different age periods; revealing the specifics of parental roles hierarchy in families with "special" children (children with disabilities, specific behavior, adopted children, children in care, etc.), as well as the study of the relationship between training methods and the individual and personal characteristics of a parent.

The optimal nature of parent-child relationship can be achieved if an adult: takes into account peculiarities of his personality and the personality of the child while choosing styles and training methods; is able to critically evaluate his own type of parental attitude, understands the structure and content of functional parental roles; is able to understand their needs with respect to the upbringing of the child; is willing to improve his or her parental competence. To optimize the parent-child relationship, we offer the scheme of parental training "Effective Parenting", consisting of 3 blocks, which can be used as a form of a teacher's or a psychologist' work with a family: Block 1 - Development of cognitive and reflective component of psychological readiness for parenthood (PRP); Block 2 - Development of the PRP personal component; Block 3 - Development of the PRP emotional and regulatory component [11].

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